were other sons by other wives growing up in the *dala* (*dala*=homestead), a woman would hasten the marriage of her own son lest when it came to paying the bride-price for him cattle might be short on account of the claims of other sons on the family resource. 582 583

Between the permission to marry, however, and marriage itself, there intervened a long chain of events, extending over months, and sometimes even over years. The mere choice of a bride was hedged about with complications and difficulties that often delayed a man's marriage considerably. This choice was, in the first place, limited by the rule that he might not marry any woman related to him, however distantly, either on his father's or on his mother's side of the family. To do this would be to commit incest, and would bring terrible consequences upon the clans and families concerned. If it happened, as it sometimes did, that a man fell in love with a girl without knowing whether he was related to her or not, only to find that she belonged to one side or other of his own family, the discovery put an end immediately to all intercourse between them. If, on the other hand, it could be established that the two were not related, the man would get permission from his father to take her as his wife, and the usual negotiations would be put in hand. It was, however, more usual for a man to leave the choice of his wife to his father, who would select a suitable maiden with regard only to the mutual advantage of the two families concerned. In this case neither the young man nor the girl were regarded as at liberty to refuse the marriage. If the son did so, it was at the cost of his father's deep displeasure; and this was a serious matter in the old days when a man was entirely dependent upon his father, not only for the means to acquire a wife, but for his livelihood in general. So to rebel was unusual. The girl was equally at the mercy of her parents. If she disliked the husband selected for her the only way to escape the match was to run off with another man. But if she did this her lover's father would only pay a very small bride price for her, even as little as a single cow, and not only was she considered to have disgraced herself (not unnaturally in view of the severe pecuniary loss suffered by a family losing a daughter for whom the customary cattle had not been received) but her conduct was regarded as a slur on the whole family. 582 835 584 626 583 577

If a young man was specially anxious to marry a girl who was not debarred by any relationship from becoming his wife, and who returned his affection, he could establish a sole claim to her by sucking her breast before witnesses. After this ceremony she could not be given in marriage to any other man. The existence of such a custom is sufficient proof that among the Luo, as among the more civilised, marriage is often the outcome of a strong personal attraction between a man and a woman. And the fact that tribal custom provides for such a contingency within an otherwise largely utilitarian 584 [201]